

Frith Lake Club

A Cultural Tradition of Noxubee County, Mississippi

By D. A. Sharpe, revised December 2006

One of the social pillars of Noxubee County and the City of Macon is the Frith Lake Club. It has a colorful and unique history of over seventy years, which this article is intended to explore. My interview in June of 2003 with my father-in-law, T. S. Boggess, Jr. (Mr. T. S.) is the source of most of this material. He has served as President of the club since 1975.

There is uncertainty as to the origin of the name, Frith. There was a hotel operating in Macon circa the turn of the century (that is 1900, not 2000). One of the privileges offered by the hotel was to take hotel guests on day trips down to this lake to fish. It apparently became known as Frith Lake, and some conjecture is that Mr. Frith may have been the hotel owner or manager.

Frith Lake is located about five miles south of Macon on U.S. Hwy 45. An unmarked gravel road going east from the highway winds around for about three miles over to the Frith Lake grounds. Anyone not familiar with where Frith Lake is would have difficulty finding the way without help. The lake is unusually deep, with some claiming it is formed over a large sink hole. One time in the 1990's the Forest Ranger had a captured alligator that Mr. Boggess gave permission to loose into the lake. This helped reduce the somewhat bothersome snake population around the lake, but the alligator apparently took to the road sometime later and most probably headed for the Noxubee River, which is adjacent to the lake.

The social birth of Frith Lake began in 1920 when four Noxubee County gentlemen went together to purchase the land around the lake for the purpose of a social club. They were Mr. Thomas S. Boggess (Mr. Tom), Lloyd L. Shannon, Julian Eugene Boggess and an attorney, Mr. Len L. Martin. The two Boggess men were brothers, and Mr. Tom was the father of Mr. T. S.

A club was formed with an initial closed membership of 20 or 25 (memory eludes us). It was closed in the sense that a limit was set on the number of the members and that any new members had to be voted upon by the membership for approval when member vacancies occurred or when, over the years, the membership limit was raised.

The initial fee for membership was fifty cents a month. The mantle piece of this endeavor was to be a dance club, a social phenomenon typical of those days in the roaring 1920's. The initial unit of the club house was completed in October of 1923. It basically consisted of a housed dance floor room with peripheral screened in side rooms for food preparation and seating. It's the main entrance room today where the fireplace is located. Of course, more additions have been added over the years to reach its size of today. Some memories claim the beginning and ending of

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construction was 1923 – 1924. There is a stone under the club house in the middle with its date inscribed. It is not a very convenient location to view it!

The socialization began with summertime use as a camp and dance occasion. The weekends were the height of the festivities. Usually a live orchestra was engaged to play. Often this was a local band. Early dances, before a club house was erected, took place on a leveled off area of ground with pine straw forming its base. In those days, the Noxubee River was good for swimming recreation, which many enjoyed.

The camp cook was a black man named Lidge (sp?) Williams. His name may have been a contraction from the Old Testament prophet's name, Elijah. He delighted the people with mighty good chow.

The families would come out to Frith Lake and pitch campsites to live a few weeks in the summer. The women and children lived in their tents and the men lived in their tents. These were somewhat large community type tents. There was a chow hall tent where they all gathered to dine. The women and children would stay during the weekdays while the men folk returned to work, returning in the evenings and on the weekends.

This pattern of activity continued through the 1920's, but the economic depression of the nation in the 1930's reflected in a decline for this club. The financial capabilities of the club and the members drifted down so far that the property was auctioned off at the Noxubee County Courthouse for \$37 back taxes. One of the original four founders, Mr. Julian Eugene Boggess, stepped forward to purchase the property for the back taxes and donated it back to the club. So, he saved the day for the club at that point.

The camping seemed to discontinue in the early 1930's in favor of merely coming out to the club house for dance and other social occasions. About that time, it was started to be called Frith Lake Country Club.

Edwin Mason Murphy, Jr. and James Horton gave leadership to the club in the 1930's and the 1940's. Part of this time was when Edwin was Mayor of Macon. About 1960, the Pine View Country Club, largely under the leadership of Dr. Morris, was formed, and that resulted in some drainage of members from the Frith Lake Country Club. Later the "Country" was dropped. Since then, it has been know as Frith Lake Club.

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Mr. T. S. (Thomas Shelton Boggess, Jr.) retired from his work at the Food Science Department of the University of Georgia and returned to the family farm on Magnolia Drive near Macon in 1973. It wasn't long before the Club invited him to rejoin. He was elected President in 1975 and has served the longest single tenure of leadership for the Frith Lake Club.

Mr. George Winter, a band leader from Alabama, has been a centerpiece of the Christmas holiday dances for each year since about 1976 (neither he nor we can remember for sure). This has kept alive the lively element of Frith Lake Club being a dance club.

Today, the Club has a thriving membership of between 50 and 60. It meets together about eight months out of the year. Two major events are on their annual calendar. The Fourth of July bar-b-que picnic is one, and the annual Christmas season holiday dance on Friday or Saturday evening after Thanksgiving is the other. The shift to Saturday in recent years was to accommodate the deer hunters of the Club, who didn't want to come in from their camps on Friday evening when they could get one more day of hunting in by waiting till Saturday!

My family and I have attended this Christmas dance for most years since the late 1970's. We cannot remember if we missed any. Our three children were teenagers from that time on and more or less grew up going to this annual dance. Quite a tradition for our family, and we have loved doing it!

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